

Governor Markell Issues State of Emergency Announces Level 1 Driving Warning to Begin at Midnight

Wilmington, DE – With a severe winter storm expected to generate significant snowfall in New Castle and Kent Counties, as well as coastal flooding and strong sustained winds in Sussex County, Governor Jack Markell has issued a State of Emergency effective Friday, January 22 at 5:00 p.m., and a “Level 1 Driving Warning” effective Saturday, January 23 at 12:00 a.m. [See text below].

At the Governor’s request, Delaware National Guard and DelDOT began pre-positioning their resources yesterday in anticipation of this weekend’s storm. The State of Emergency declaration allows the Governor to deploy the Delaware National Guard, DelDOT, first responders, and other agencies to open or close roadways and take other actions to protect public safety and property during the storm event.

According to state law, a “Level 1 Driving Warning” means that any person operating a motor vehicle on Delaware roadways must exercise extra caution. All nonessential employees, public and private, are encouraged not to operate a motor vehicle unless there is a significant safety, health or business reason to do so.

If the predicted forecast comes to fruition, the “Level 1 Driving Warning” is likely to be upgraded to a “Level 2 Driving Restriction” as roadway condition deteriorate Saturday. The Governor continues to monitor the forecast regularly and will remain in frequent contact with emergency management and transportation officials over the course of the

storm.

According to state law, under a “Level 2 Driving Restriction,” no person may operate a motor vehicle on Delaware roadways, except for persons designated as “essential personnel” or who have received a waiver from the Delaware Emergency Management Agency. The following persons are specifically designated as “essential personnel” under Delaware law:

- Operators of snow removal equipment (public and private);
- Persons providing public utility services;
- Persons providing healthcare services; and
- Persons providing food and fuel deliveries.

The National Weather Service has declared a Blizzard Warning for New Castle County and Kent and Sussex Counties are under a Winter Storm Watch. Residents are encouraged to avoid travelling area roads Friday night and Saturday, and Delaware residents in flood-prone areas in Kent and Sussex should seriously consider relocating during this time.

“With authorities predicting snowfall amounts of 12-18 inches, it is important that all Delawareans take the necessary precautions to protect themselves and their loved ones”, said Governor Markell. “Conditions are predicted to rapidly deteriorate during the overnight hours and through tomorrow, which will create hazardous driving conditions and the threat of flooding in low-lying coastal areas. That’s why I’m urging Delawareans to find a safe place to be this weekend and to arrive there this evening, and why I’m asked all non-essential personnel to avoid travelling our roadways after the snow begins so that DelDOT and emergency crews can clear the roads and keep our citizens safe.”

Because of the amount of snow expected and duration of the snowfall, many roads will be snow-covered and could be impassable throughout the day tomorrow. DelDOT has been working hard to prepare the roads for snow and to prepare its crews for a weekend of plowing.

DelDOT crews started applying brine solution to Delaware roadways on Wednesday, and have since completed those operations. All equipment used in snow removal operations have been checked and rechecked from the snow plows to the windshield wipers. Plow trucks are being loaded with salt, and all normal snow removal preparations are underway.

DelDOT has Equipment Operators for 330 snow plows currently at work and on standby ready to act as the snowfall requires this evening and Saturday.

Yesterday, the Governor authorized the National Guard, in coordination with the Delaware Emergency Management Agency, to pre-position its forces to assist local first responders with stranded motorists, flooding, and other emergencies that may require their attention. They will remain in position to assist Delawareans throughout the weekend.

Code Purple locations will open today in all three counties for individuals who are homeless and in need of shelter during the storm. More information, including a list of sites statewide, [is available here](#). To be connected to Code Purple resources, call Delaware 2-1-1, search for “Code Purple” on the Delaware 2-1-1 mobile app or on its website at www.delaware211.org and click on the Code Purple button.

Winter Storm precautions released by the Department of Agriculture [can be found here](#).

The Governor urges media and residents to check social media for continuous updates:

<https://twitter.com/GovernorMarkell>

<https://twitter.com/DelawareDOT>

<https://twitter.com/DelawareEMA>

Executive Department

Dover

DECLARATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY FOR NEW CASTLE, KENT AND

**SUSSEX COUNTIES EFFECTIVE AT 5:00 P.M. ON FRIDAY, JANUARY 22,
2016**

**AND A LEVEL I DRIVING WARNING FOR NEW CASTLE, KENT AND SUSSEX
COUNTIES EFFECTIVE AT 12:00 A.M. ON SATURDAY, JANUARY 23, 2016**

DUE TO EXPECTED BLIZZARD CONDITIONS AND COASTAL FLOODING

WHEREAS, a significant winter storm is imminently forthcoming in the State of Delaware, and the National Weather Service has issued a Blizzard Warning for New Castle County and Kent County, Delaware, and a Winter Storm Warning for Sussex County, Delaware, beginning at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, January 22, 2016, and ending at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, January 24, 2016; and

WHEREAS, the National Weather Service forecast for New Castle County and Kent County includes predictions of whiteout conditions, including snow accumulation of 12 to 24 inches in New Castle and Kent Counties, and snow accumulation of 4-8 inches in Sussex County, resulting in potentially hazardous road and travel conditions in all three counties; and

WHEREAS, the National Weather Service estimates that the strongest winds and greatest potential for blizzard conditions will occur during the day on Saturday, January 23, 2016, but urges extreme caution in road travel during the evening hours of Friday, January 22, 2016; and

WHEREAS, the National Weather Service has also issued a Coastal Flood Advisory for New Castle County, Delaware, beginning at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 23, 2016, and ending at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 24, 2016, potentially resulting in some tidal flooding and road closures; and

WHEREAS, the National Weather Service has issued a Coastal Flood Warning for Kent County, Delaware and Sussex County, Delaware, beginning at 4:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 23, 2016, and ending at 12:00 noon on Sunday, January 24, 2016, and has predicted tidal flooding, resulting in road closures and many roads potentially being impassable on either side of Saturday morning's high tide; and

WHEREAS, on January 22, 2016, I authorized the Delaware National Guard to assist state and local officials in all three counties with any necessary response and recovery activity for this severe winter storm; and

WHEREAS, the forthcoming winter storm is expected to create hazardous road conditions in all three counties that present an imminent danger to persons traveling on Delaware roads, as well potential danger to life, safety and property in all three counties;

NOW THEREFORE, I, JACK A. MARKELL, pursuant to Title 20, Chapter 31 of the Delaware Code, do hereby declare a State of Emergency for the entire State of Delaware. This State of Emergency will be **effective in all three counties on January 22, 2016, at 5:00 p.m.**, and shall continue until terminated as provided under state law. The nature of the emergency includes projected blizzard conditions and possible road flooding in Northern Delaware, including New Castle and Northern Kent County, and high winds and coastal flooding in Sussex County, resulting potentially in hazardous road conditions throughout the State. Along with such other actions authorized by Title 20, Chapter 31 of the Delaware Code, I specifically direct and authorize:

1. All departments and agencies of the State of Delaware shall assist in response and recovery activities, as directed by and in coordination with the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA), in consultation with the Secretary of the Department of Safety and Homeland Security (DSHS), necessary in those areas affected by the storm.

2. As of **January 23, 2016 at midnight (12:00 a.m.)**, and until further notice, a **Level 1 Driving Warning** is in effect. Any person operating a motor vehicle shall exercise extra caution in the operation of that vehicle for the duration of the emergency. Nonessential employees, regardless of whether employed by a public or private entity, are encouraged not to operate a motor vehicle for the duration of the emergency, unless there is a significant safety, health or business

reason to do so. State and local officials are directed to remove abandoned vehicles from roads in affected areas at the expense of the vehicle owner.

3. In addition to the Level 1 Driving Warning, this Order constitutes notice to Delaware residents and businesses in all three counties that additional driving precautions or restrictions may be forthcoming in the morning of Saturday, January 23, 2016.

4. The Delaware National Guard shall take precautionary or responsive actions directed by the Director of DEMA, in consultation with the Secretary of DSHS, upon request by local authorities.

5. I authorize the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) and the Delaware State Police, in consultation with DEMA and the Secretary of DSHS, to order such bridge and road closures as necessary to protect the health and safety of the public.

6. I reserve the right to take or direct state or local authorities to take, without issuance of further written order, any other necessary actions authorized by Title 20, Chapter 31 of the Delaware Code to respond to this emergency.

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